

Share the road



Our streets and highways are becoming more crowded every day. Therefore, it is necessary that motorists and bicyclists know and practice

the rules of the road. You should always be aware of the traffic around you and be prepared for emergency situations.

Bicycle ridership is increasing in North Carolina. More and more people are biking for transportation, recreation and health. At the same time, urban traffic has become more congested and once-quiet country roads now carry high volumes of commuter traffic generated by rapid development in rural areas. As a result, conflicts between bicyclists and motorists have increased. That's why it's important for both bicyclists and motorists to learn how to "Share the Road".

North Carolina law defines a bicycle as a vehicle, thus granting bicycle riders the same rights and duties as the drivers of other vehicles. These rights and duties are addressed in more detail earlier in this publication and also in A Guide to North Carolina Bicycle and Pedestrian Laws,

which is online at www.ncdot.org/transit/bicycle/laws/resources/BikePedLawsGuidebook-Part-1.pdf.

In general, for bicyclists, sharing the road means:

- Riding on the right-hand side of the road, in the same direction as other traffic
- Obeying all traffic signs and signals
- Properly signaling all movements, while making sure that such movements can be made safely
- Yielding to other drivers and pedestrians, as appropriate, at intersections, alleys and traffic circles
- Moving to the right to allow lawfully operated overtaking vehicles to safely pass, and not increasing your speed until completely passed

It is important to obey all traffic laws and ride in a predictable manner to increase motorists' cooperation and create a positive perception of bicyclists as road users. Too often, bicyclists do not behave as prudent vehicle operators, thus angering motorists and contributing to the image of bicyclists as "scoff-laws".

On the other hand, most motorists are not aware that bicyclists have a right to be on the road and that they should "Share the Road". In extreme cases, motorists have been known to intentionally harass bicyclists by trying to run them off the road, throwing things at them or committing other unlawful acts.

Since a bicycle is defined as a vehicle, motorists are required to take the actions described below when encountering bicyclists on the roadway. The reference numbers for the statutes are noted in brackets and the full text can be referenced online at www.ncleg.net/gascripts/statutes/statutestoc.pl.

Relevant to sharing the road, the North Carolina motor vehicle laws require motorists to:

- Signal movements when starting, stopping or turning, taking care that such a movement can be made safely; and, giving a clearly audible signal whenever the operation of any other vehicle may be affected [20-154]

- Yield the right-of-way, as required, at an intersection, alley or traffic circle [GS 20-155] and [20-156]
- Leave a minimum of two feet of clearance when passing a bicyclist on the left and not move back to the right until safely past the overtaken bicycle [GS 20-149]
- Not pass on the crest of a hill or at a curve in the road where the driver cannot see at least 500 feet ahead [GS 20-150]

Drivers are urged to watch for cyclists on the road and take the following precautions.

1. Wait until the cyclist has cleared the intersection before making a turn to the right or left. The most common error for an automobile driver is to make a left turn directly into the path of an oncoming cyclist without seeing him until it is too late to stop. Don't make a right turn in front of a bicyclist you have just passed. He or she may be forced to stop quickly and could lose control of the bicycle, causing a crash.
2. When passing a cyclist, slow down and make sure the rider is aware of your presence. Leave plenty of room between the rider and your vehicle. If there is no room to pass because traffic is approaching, wait until it has gone by, and then pass.

3. Be careful in trying to judge the speed of a bicycle. A bicycle may be traveling faster than you think. Automobile drivers sometimes cut in front of a bicyclist too soon because they have not judged their speed properly.
4. Be alert for the cyclist who suddenly swerves or turns in front of you with little or no warning. Cyclists sometimes wait until the last second to move to the center of the roadway to make a left turn.
5. At night, do not assume that cyclists will always have lights and reflectors. Be alert for them. When meeting an oncoming cyclist, always dim your lights.



The "Share the Road" yellow/green warning sign, has been erected along certain roads to alert motorists to the possible presence of bicyclists.